



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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Sept. 6, 2005

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MUSSEL POACHING CASE HEADS TO TRIAL SEPT. 12

Des Moines – Iowa conservation officers charged a Lee County man with gross over limit of mussels and with unlawful taking of an endangered species that was discovered during a routine inspection on Aug. 5.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) water patrol officer Greg Hall found Henry E. Gerveler, of Argyle, in possession of 289 mussels, including the threatened Butterfly mussel.

Officer Hall was conducting a routine fishing license check and safety equipment inspection on the Mississippi River, near Fort Madison, around 5 p.m. on Aug. 5, when he discovered the mussels. Mussels are often used by commercial fishing operations during the late summer months to catch channel catfish because the fleshy part of the mussel is strong and can stay on the hook and catch multiple fish.

Anglers may harvest mussels on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers only and have a daily limit of 24, and a possession limit of 48.

Officers seized Gerveler's boat, motor and trailer and have filed paperwork to condemn the property. Gerveler's initial court appearance is Sept. 12. If found guilty, a condemnation hearing will be scheduled after the trial.

The DNR has filed for civil damages for the mussels at \$15 for each of the 265 mussels over the limit. The fine for each animal classified by the Iowa Natural Resource Commission as threatened or endangered is \$1,000.

For more information, contact Mick Klemesrud at 515-281-8653.

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VOLUNTEERS TO CONSTRUCT GARBAGE SCULPTURE AT CLAY COUNTY FAIR

SPENCER — Car parts, ladders and other trash removed from a northwest Iowa river return to the area this month – as art supplies. During both weekends of the Clay County Fair (Sept. 10 – 18) in Spencer, fairgoers will help turn salvaged metal into artwork.

Volunteers with Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) collected nearly 3-tons of scrap metal from the Little Sioux River this summer – part of the 124-cubic-yards of trash collected. The project, an annual river cleanup, brought roughly 200 canoe-mounted volunteers to the area in June.

As part of *Riverse*, an artistic companion effort to Project AWARE, artist David Williamson will guide Clay County fairgoers as they melt and hammer some of that metal into a sculpture. Williamson will set up shop near the fairgrounds' log cabin, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 10 – 11 and Saturday, Sept. 17.

In addition, visitors can view last year's *Riverse* sculpture. AWARE organizers will display it near Williamson's station on his workdays and inside the log cabin during the rest of the fair.

Project AWARE began in 2002 on the Maquoketa River and has invited volunteers to paddle a different Iowa river every year. Participants can join for as little as a day or as long as the entire week, paddling the river, removing trash and learning about water quality.

Riverse aims to honor the work of AWARE volunteers and call attention to water quality issues. Williamson first joined Project AWARE in 2004, after volunteers had tackled the Des Moines River watershed. Volunteers that year helped Williamson construct a 10-foot-tall canoe paddle using metal collected from waterways along the Des Moines River.

As in 2004, volunteers began creating this year's *Riverse* sculpture at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines. This year, for the first time, Clay County fairgoers will continue that work. Plans for the 2005 piece envision a hollowed-out water droplet – large enough for viewers to step inside it.

For more information, contact Brian Soenen at (515) 205-8587 or at Brian.Soenen@dnr.state.ia.us or Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us.

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IOWA PARKS WELCOME VOLUNTEERS ON PUBLIC LANDS DAY

DES MOINES — Every year, Iowa state parks treat visitors to beautiful scenery and cherished outdoors recreation. This month, Iowans can give back to their beloved parks during a national day of volunteer action.

On Saturday, Sept. 24, volunteers across the country will help to beautify and preserve state and federal lands during National Public Lands Day. The Iowa DNR's Keepers of the Land volunteer program invites Iowans to take part by volunteering at an Iowa state park.

Interested parties should contact their favorite Iowa state park and ask about potential volunteer activities. Current projects in many Iowa state parks would benefit from additional volunteers.

Possible activities include building or clearing trail, removing invasive species, picking up litter, helping with maintenance and construction and many other fun and rewarding tasks. Visit www.iowadnr.com/parks/state_park_list/ for a list of Iowa state parks and contact information.

National Public Lands Day occurs annually, bringing thousands of volunteers to the nation's public lands. Last year, 80,000 Americans volunteered across the country. Iowans who choose to participate will help to improve and protect the beauty and health of their state's public lands. Visit www.publiclandsday.org for more information about the national event.

Partner organizations with the Keepers of the Land also have many other volunteer opportunities planned for the coming month. Visit www.keepersoftheland.org for more information, including an on-line events calendar. Other upcoming activities include:

- The First Annual Carter Lake Cleanup, Saturday, Sept. 17, near Omaha, Neb. Contact Steven Wilbur at (712) 847-0847 or at sswilbur1@aol.com for more information or visit our website.
- The Fourth Annual Upper Iowa River Cleanup, Saturday, Sept. 24, near Cresco. Contact Richard Kittelson at (563) 864-7112 or at kittelso@netins.net or visit our website.

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us.

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WOOD DUCK SURVEY HELPS NATIONAL STUDY; STATE COULD USE SOME WATER PRIOR TO DUCK SEASON

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

As we approached the low, wire maze, a dozen ducks lifted off. They hadn't quite followed the trail of bait far enough. Another two dozen had. Pushing through the wire throats of the live trap, they were filling their crops with shelled corn.

Here, on the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, they were about to become statistics. Hawkeye manager Dennis Procter and volunteer Janette Kelsey herded them toward one end of the trap, where they poured into a wooden crate set at the exit. Several were familiar with the procedure. They already wore aluminum leg bands denoting they had been caught. Evidently the lure of a free meal outweighed the minute of stress, as they were banded, sexed, aged and released. "We band them so we can learn which flyway they use; what their migration route is. That helps us understand the 'food line' that waterfowl follow each fall," explains Procter. "If a hunter harvests a bird, there is a number on the band. When it is called in, the (U.S.) Fish & Wildlife Service records the data and analyzes it."

Hunters calling in band numbers receive information showing when and where birds were banded. Besides the location, the band indicates whether the duck is a mature bird or from this year's hatch. It also notes whether it is a female or male. Spreading a wing of an adult female, Procter showed Kelsey the familiar tear drop pattern of a hen's flight feathers. Drakes show only a less defined white line across the tip. They also sport more red and orange in the eyes and bills. Juvenile birds were easiest told by the immature tail feather development.

Just *banding* wood ducks is a success story in itself. "This is one of the few parts of the country where we do produce a lot of wood ducks," explains Procter. "At one time, they were close to extinction." Flooding and human development meant many of its critical lowland timber nesting cavities were disappearing. Through habitat restoration, and a big boost from the familiar nest box program, those wood duck broods have returned. It is now the third, sometimes second, most common duck harvested in Iowa.

And there is more of a chance to take ducks, thanks to Iowa's duck banding scorecard. Biologists regularly meet the federally set goal of several thousand ducks each year. Proving there is a stable population of 'woodies' pays off as waterfowl hunting days are allocated from year to year.

Low Water, Good Vegetation Heading into Duck Seasons

With a dry summer, many waterfowl areas have great vegetation, heading into the duck openers this month. Iowa's north duck zone opens Sept. 17. The south zone opens Sept. 24. "Vegetation on our main lake and in the potholes is the best in several years," says Procter. "We didn't flood this year, so everything had a chance to grow. On the other hand, we need some rain. Many potholes are pretty dry."

The pattern shows through on the Mississippi River, too. "We didn't have a big flood, with dirty conditions this spring and summer," relays DNR Mississippi River biologist Mike Griffin. Griffin did a vegetation study recently on pools 9 (Lansing) and 19 (Keokuk). "That let sunlight through the water column to promote growth of that vegetation. There's more submergent vegetation than we've seen in a long time."

Griffin warns, though, that low water levels and high fuel prices will take a bigger bite out of the budget. With low river conditions, pumping is needed to keep water in the low lying waterfowl areas. Those pumps will be more expensive to operate with every dime a gallon increase in fuel prices.

Urban Season Opens; Others to follow

Iowa's two urban goose zones run September 1 through 15, targeting growing populations of local Canada geese. Zones have been set up around Des Moines and in the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids corridor. Hunters need to check, though, with the local city hall if they plan to do any shooting within the corporate limits. Neither Iowa City nor Cedar Rapids, for instance, allow hunting. Many of the smaller towns require hunters to either register or to at least check in, to alert officials to their presence. Hunting in rural, unincorporated areas is legal, providing all other hunting regulations are observed.

Maps showing the zones are available by going to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources website; www.iowadnr.com, clicking on 'hunting information,' then 'waterfowl.'

Because local Canadas are being hunted, the Hawkeye Wildlife Area refuge will remain open to hunting, through the September 1-15 urban goose season. The refuge, several hundred acres on the south side of the Iowa River/Coralville Reservoir, near North Liberty, is normally closed to hunting. With the waterfowl migration not really underway yet, wildlife officials okayed the refuge for local goose hunting. It *will* be closed after September 15.

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